

Message Text

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16

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

AID-05 OMB-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /084 W

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R 032145Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1751

INFO USCINCSO FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 4495

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CLOSING OF BUENOS AIRES DAILY

REF: BA-4431

1. DURING EARLY MORNING JULY 2 INSISTENT RUMOR THAT LA OPINION WAS ABOUT TO BE CLOSED DOWN CIRCULATED THROUGHOUT CITY. ACCORDING TO RUMOR, MRS. PERON HAD SIGNED DECREE ORDERING CLOSURE OF LA OPINION AND ONLY QUESTION LEFT WAS TIMING. REPORT SENT TREMORS THROUGH POLITICAL CIRCLES AND LOCAL PRESS WHO INTERPRETED THIS MOVE AS INDICATION OF HOW FAR LOPEZ REGA WAS WILLING TO GO TO SETTLE CRISIS IN HIS FAVOR. EMBOFF CALLED LA OPINION AND WAS TOLD THAT SINCE JULY 1 KEY STAFFERS HAD BEEN RECEIVING CALLS FROM SYMPATHIZERS WITHIN GOA WARNING THEM OF POSSIBLE CLOSING OF PAPER AND PHYSICAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CERTAIN REPORTERS. EMBOFF TALKED BRIEFLY WITH HERIBERTO KAHN, LA OPINION TOPPOLITICAL COLUMNIST, DURING AFTERNOON OF JULY 2. KAHN SAID THAT "GOVERNMENT SOURCES" HAD AFFIRMED EXISTENCE OF DECREE BUT HAD ADDED THAT "FOR THE MOMENT" THERE WAS SOME HESITATION ABOUT APPLYING IT. THROUGH- OUT JULY 2 LA OPINION WAS DELUGED BY EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FROM CONGRESSMEN, MILITARY OFFICERS AND OF COURSE VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE BUENOS AIRES PRESS CORPS.

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2. KAHN HIMSELF HAS BECOME A FOCAL POINT FOR GOVERNMENT
IRE SINCE IN LAST WEEK HE HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL EXCLUSIVE
STORIES OUTLINING DETAILED AND ACCURATE ACCOUNTS OF
POLITICAL INFIGHTING AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. HIS ARTICLE
ON THE MASSERA-LOPEZ REGA CONFRONTATION (SEE REFTEL)
BEING PERHAPS THE MOST EXPLOSIVE FROM GOA POINT OF
VIEW. ONE LA OPINION STAFFER TOLD EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER
THAT NAVAL OFFICERS HAD CALLED KAHN AND OFFERED HIM
THEIR PROTECTION.

3. PAPER ALLOWED TO PUBLISH EDITION OF JULY 3 AND LEAD
OFF WITH EDITORIAL SAYING "FREEDOM OF PRESS EXISTS IN
ARGENTINA BUT ONE MUST BE WILLING TO EXERCISE THAT
FREEDOM". FOLLOWING APPEARANCE THIS MORNING WITH FEISTY
DEFENSE OF PRESS FREEDOM, MOST FELT IMMEDIATE THREAT OF
INTERVENTION OF PAPER HAD ENDED. HOWEVER, AROUND MID-
DAY SECRETARY VILLONE'S OFFICE HAD ISSUED STATEMENT THAT
LA OPINION HAD IN ITS RECENT ISSUES PERTURBED PUBLIC
TRANQUILITY AND THEREFORE PRESS SECRETARIAT WAS GOING
TO MOVE EXPEDITIOUSLY TO INVOKE SANCTIONS PROVIDED FOR
IN ANTI-SUBVERSION LAW--I.E. TO CLOSE IT.

4. CLOSURE OF LA OPINION AT THIS POINT COULD HAVE
SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS. PRESS SOURCES INFORM US
OTHER PAPERS PREPARED TO TAKE UP CUDGELS IN LA
OPINION FAVOR. JOURNALIST UNION AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL
LEADERS PLAN TO FLOOD GOVERNMENT WITH PROTESTS IN EVENT
OF CLOSURE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL REPRESSION, NEWSPAPERS, CLOSURE OF OFFICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS04495
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750232-0358
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750784/aaaacwqi.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BUENOS AIRES 4431
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 SEP 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <17 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE CLOSING OF BUENOS AIRES DAILY
TAGS: PINT, AR, LA OPINION
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006